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Mays Middle has much to celebrate

Historic designation, renovations praised

By IRENE MEDEROS
Herald Writer

Mays Middle School celebrated the old and the new Friday.

The 57-year-old school commemorated its designation as a Dade historical site, and hailed several million dollars' worth of renovations and additions.

"The school serves as a major institution for the community," said principal Robert Stinson. "Many people who live in this area have graduated from Mays, and so did I. It's an important part of the history of Dade County."

Several School Board members, Dade Schools Superintendent Octavio Visiedo and scores of residents attended the dedication at the school, 11700 Hainlin Mill Dr.

For the past 10 years, a community group has been petitioning Dade County to designate the school as a historical landmark, Stinson said. The commission approved the designation Dec. 18, and the plaque was handed to the school Friday.

Mays was originally established by black pioneers Arthur and Polly Mays in 1916 and was one of South Dade's first all-black schools.

It actually began inside a room in Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church, where first- through third-grade kids were taught. Mays then expanded into another classroom at New Bethel church and hired a second teacher for fourth through sixth grades.

Mays administrators proposed a resolution to build a new black school in the area in 1926. The school board, under financial pressure, rejected the request.

"The black community in Goulds felt it was important to have their children educated and they did everything in their power to see that that happened, even against great odds," said Teresa Lenox, historian for Metro's division of historic preservation.